

Resident Advisor Community Action Plan Assessment Report - Fall 2001

Syracuse University
Office of Residence Life

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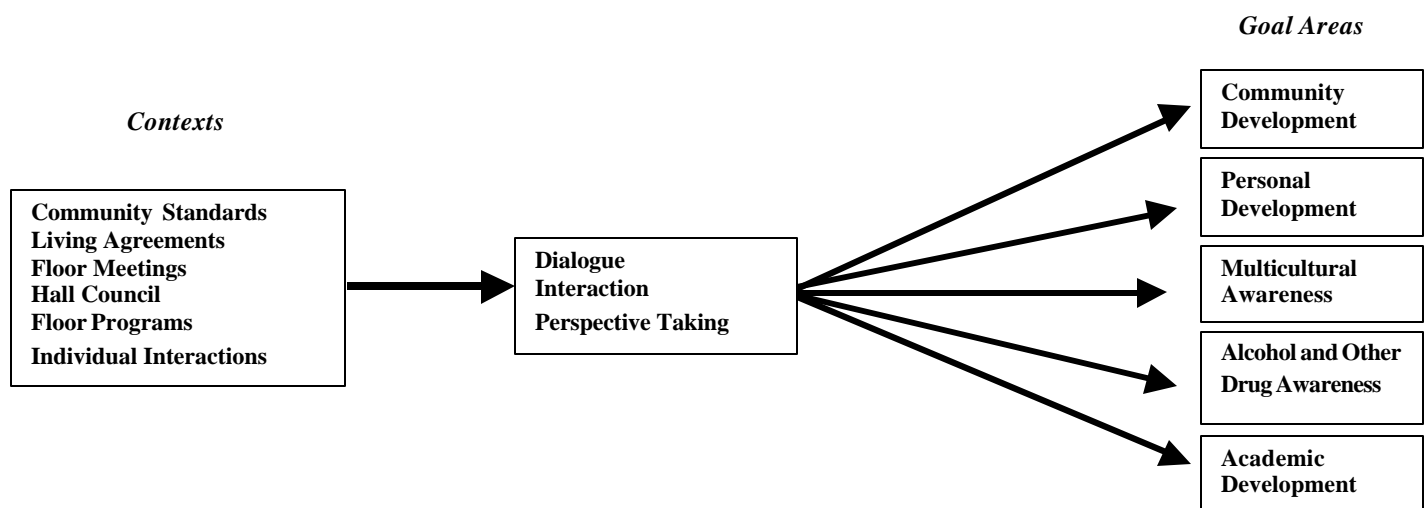
Overview

The Office of Residence Life 2001 Resident Advisor Survey was administered in the Fall 2001 semester to 145 RAs. The survey was delivered to Mentor RAs who were responsible for collecting completed surveys and returning them to the Assessment Committee. This survey contained thirty multiple-choice questions pertaining to perceptions of the RA role, Community Action Plan (CAP) structure, CAP goals and CAP contexts. The results are summarized in this report.

Residential Program

The mission statement in the Office of Residence Life at Syracuse University is "to foster student development, support academic success, and celebrate diversity by creating intentional programs and experiences." This is accomplished by the Community Action Plan (CAP), which was developed and implemented by the Office of Residence Life. The CAP guides residential staff, specifically Resident Advisors, in performing their job responsibilities by promoting dialogue, interaction, and perspective taking around specific issues within a variety of contexts (Figure 1.1). The CAP directly addresses issues related to community development, personal development, multicultural awareness, alcohol and drug awareness, and academic development within a variety of contexts (i.e., community standards, floor meetings, floor programs, individual interactions, etc.). Figure 1.1 is a model of the guiding philosophy, the Community Action Plan.

Figure 1.1 - A model of the residential program at Syracuse University.



Purpose

This survey was created in order to gather information on RA's perceptions of their roles and their experiences with the CAP program.

Methods

The survey was delivered in paper and pencil form to Mentor Resident Advisors (MRAs) who were responsible for collecting completed surveys and returning them to the Assessment Committee. This survey, conducted during the fall 2001 semester, contained thirty multiple-choice questions pertaining to perceptions of the RA role, CAP structure, CAP Goals and CAP contexts. Completed surveys were entered by hand into a database for analysis.

Results

Data Analysis

Results are reported in aggregate form to indicate the raw scores and percentages of responses to each multiple-choice question. Additional comparative analyses were conducted that compared responses to each question between first-year and returning RAs as well as between RAs located in first-year centers and RAs located in upper-class buildings. These comparisons, however, revealed few variations and are not reported here.

Demographics

Surveys were collected from RAs in every building. Of those surveyed (n=145), 143 were returned. Of the 143 returned, one was a new RA who had not yet received any training and one survey was returned completely blank. Both of these surveys were removed before data analysis, lowering the number of surveys from 143 to 141. Therefore the response rate was 97.24%. Additionally, some questions were left blank or marked incorrectly on various surveys. As a result, the percentage of responses for each question was calculated based on the number of total responses for that question.

Residence Hall	Completed Surveys
Boland	8
Booth	8
Brewster	12
Day	14
DellPlain	8
Flint	15
Haven	7
Kimmel	3
Lawrinson	18
Marion	3
Sadler	15
Shaw	13
Skyhall	3
Walnut	2
Washington	2
Watson	10
Grand Total	141

Perceptions of the RA Role

Resident Advisor's were asked to indicate what they perceive as their primary role in the Office of Residence Life. The majority of RAs (51%) indicated the role of friend, followed by facilitator (26%), and Educator (20%). This data is summarized in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 - What do you see as your primary role as a RA?

Primary Role of an RA	Percentage	n
Friend	51%	65
Facilitator	26%	34
Authority Figure	1%	1
Disciplinarian	2%	2
Educator	20%	26

CAP Structure

Regarding overall structure, the majority of RAs (88%) reported the CAP as being structured or very structured. Similarly, a high percentage of RAs reported the five goal areas of the CAP (93%) and the five contexts of the CAP (89%) as being structured or very structured.

Table 1.2 - Indicate the level of structure for the following:

	CAP Overall		5 Goal Areas of the CAP		5 Contexts of the CAP	
	Percentage	n	Percentage	n	Percentage	n
Very Unstructured	1%	1	0%	0	0%	0
Unstructured	11%	15	7%	10	11%	14
Structured	68%	93	69%	94	70%	95
Very Structured	20%	28	24%	32	19%	26

CAP Goals

When asked about educating their residents about alcohol and other drugs, a majority (82%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had received the necessary training in August 2001. A high percentage (89%) also agreed that they had received the training necessary for discussing issues related to diversity on the floor. RAs also agreed or strongly agreed that they had received the necessary training to: encourage people on their floors to get to know each other (91%), get to know residents as individuals (81%), encourage people on the floor to share perspectives and have open dialogue (88%), and empower residents to be leaders on the floor (62%). Table 1.3 summarizes this data.

Table 1.3 - During August, I was provided with necessary training to ...

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Educate my residents about alcohol and other drugs.	1% (n=2)	17% (n=23)	65% (n=90)	17% (n=23)
Discuss issues related to diversity on my floor.	0% (n=0)	11% (n=15)	64% (n=89)	25% (n=34)
Create a floor environment that assists my residents in doing better in their courses.	1% (n=2)	26% (n=35)	58% (n=79)	15% (n=20)
Encourage people on my floor to get to know each other.	1% (n=1)	8% (n=11)	55% (n=76)	36% (n=50)
Get to know my residents as an individual.	2% (n=3)	17% (n=23)	52% (n=71)	29% (n=40)
Encourage people on my floor to share perspectives and have open dialogue.	0% (n=0)	11% (n=15)	65% (n=89)	24% (n=32)
Empower residents to be leaders on their floor.	4% (n=5)	33% (n=45)	48% (n=65)	15% (n=20)

There was agreement that personal development (98%), academic development (98%), community development (98%), multicultural awareness (97%), and alcohol and other drug awareness (95%) are important to have as goals of the Community Action Plan. Table 1.4 summarizes this data.

Table 1.4 - It is important to have the following as a goal of residence life:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Personal Development	0% (n=0)	2% (n=3)	47% (n=64)	51% (n=70)
Academic Development	0% (n=0)	2% (n=3)	53% (n=72)	45% (n=62)
Community Development	0% (n=0)	2% (n=2)	45% (n=62)	53% (n=73)
Multicultural Awareness	1% (n=1)	2% (n=3)	53% (n=73)	44% (n=60)
Alcohol and Other Drug Awareness	0% (n=0)	5% (n=7)	64% (n=88)	31% (n=42)

CAP Contexts

Overall, RAs indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed that they were provided the necessary training to interact with their residents on an individual basis (83%), facilitate floor meetings that involve dialogue, interaction, and perspective-taking (85%), facilitate the setting of community standards (85%), and program in the 5 CAP goal areas (82%). RAs agreed to a lesser extent that they were provided the necessary training to facilitate a living agreement between roommates (72%). Table 1.5 summarizes this data.

Table 1.5 - During August, I was provided with necessary training to ...

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Interact with my residents on an individual basis	1% (n=2)	16% (n=22)	63% (n=86)	20% (n=27)
Facilitate floor meetings that involve dialogue, interaction, and perspective-taking	1% (n=1)	14% (n=19)	65% (n=88)	20% (n=28)
Facilitate the setting of community standards	2% (n=3)	13% (n=18)	62% (n=85)	23% (n=31)
Program in the 5 CAP goal areas	0% (n=0)	18% (n=24)	64% (n=87)	18% (n=25)
Facilitate a living agreement between roommates	5% (n=7)	23% (n=31)	57% (n=77)	15% (n=21)

RAs were asked about the importance of particular contexts in building a strong community. Overall the most agreement (RAs agreeing and strongly agreeing) was concentrated on individual interactions (100%), floor standards (95%) and floor programs (92%). RAs also largely agreed that hall-wide programs (84%), floor meetings (82%), and living agreements (82%) are important in building a strong community.

Table 1.6 - The following context is important when building a strong community:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Individual Interactions	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	32% (n=44)	68% (n=93)
Floor Standards	0% (n=0)	5% (n=7)	61% (n=83)	34% (n=46)
Floor meetings	5% (n=6)	13% (n=18)	62% (n=85)	20% (n=28)
Living Agreements	2% (n=3)	16% (n=21)	61% (n=83)	21% (n=29)
Floor Programs	1% (n=2)	7% (n=10)	53% (n=72)	39% (n=53)
Hall-wide Programs	2% (n=3)	14% (n=19)	63% (n=85)	21% (n=28)

Implications

CAP Structure

Overall, Resident Advisors reported that the CAP had structure. It is unclear at this time whether the Resident Advisor staff prefers the structure or not and therefore, no value can be associated with the high level of structure. Further assessment is needed to determine the optimal level of structure that would make the CAP easiest to implement while also providing the autonomy necessary for each Resident Advisor to maximize creativity.

CAP Goals

While the majority of Resident Advisors indicated they received the necessary training to educate students on the 5 goals of the CAP, two areas did emerge in the results that may indicate more training is required. Only 73% of Resident Advisors reported that they had the training necessary to create a floor environment that would be conducive to academic success. With many students reporting on the Community Survey that they are unable to study on their floor or in their room, Resident Advisors should be provided with additional training which outlines strategies and techniques to enhance the academic climate on their floor. In addition, only 63% of Resident Advisors indicated that they received enough training to know how to empower residents to be leaders on their floor. It is clear that additional training is necessary in this area. Considering the departmental value associated with student leadership and the social change model for leadership, training Resident Advisors on ways to empower their residents should be a priority.

In relation to the 5 CAP goal areas, Resident Advisors appear to agree that they are important to have as a primary goal of residence life. Over 90% agreed that each goal is something a residence life program should incorporate. Therefore, more training should be provided on ways Resident Advisors can educate residents in these areas.

CAP Contexts

The results of this survey resemble the results of the Community Survey, which was completed by residence hall students. Perhaps of most importance is the emphasis placed on the individual interactions by Resident Advisors with residents. In this survey, 100% of Resident Advisors indicated that these interactions are important in building community. In the Community Survey, residents also indicated individual interactions as being the most valuable. There are strong implications related to the training of Resident Advisors that emerge as a result of this comparison. Resident Advisor training should be reviewed to ensure that paraprofessional staff members are receiving the necessary skills to have meaningful individual interactions with residents in each of the 5 goal areas of the CAP. While 83% of the Resident Advisors indicated they received the necessary training to interact with individual residents, it is not known whether they received enough training to interact with them in an intentional manner in the areas of personal, academic, and community development, and multicultural and alcohol and other drug awareness.

In addition, training may be required on facilitating living agreements between roommates. Only 72% of the Resident Advisor staff agreed that they received the necessary training on how to facilitate such a meeting. Therefore, the training format and material should be reviewed in an effort to improve Resident Advisors' skills related to facilitating living agreements between roommates.